

Harold Pritchett Oral History
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HAROLD PRITCHETT
FIRST INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL WOODWORKERS OF AMERICA

Narrator: Harold Pritchett

Interviewer: Karyl Winn

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KARYL WINN 00:00:01

The tape recorded interview with Mr. Harold Pritchett, first international president of the International Woodworkers of America. The interview was done in Burnaby, British Columbia, October 31, 1970. The

interviewer is Karyl Winn. (pauses) Mr. Pritchett, would you like to come in at how you first became involved in the lumber industry and then unionizing efforts in the lumber industry?

HAROLD PRITCHETT 00:00:36

Well, I first became employed in the woodworking industry at the age of 15, working 10 hours a day at 10 cents an hour. And my first experience in the trade union was when the organizers of the OBU [One Big Union (IWW in Canada)] came to our mill, and called a meeting in the [?Army?] Hall in Port Moody, in 1921. And I attended that meeting, and the man on the door asked me how old I was. And I told him I was 15 and he said I was too young, to go home. So I was denied entry into the meeting. Well, I kind of my--However, later I learned to saw shingles, and the Shingle Weavers' Union was organized in 1925, and I became one of its first members. This union was chartered directly by the American Federation of Labor, known as a "federal union." (pauses) Later I became the local union president and business agent of the Shingle Weavers' Union and delegate to the Vancouver-New Westminster Trades and Labor Council. At the behest of the shingle employers here, who resisted improved wages and working conditions in our industry, which were very low, invited William Green, the president of the Federation of Labor to do something about it. The result was that Bill Green lifted the charter of our union, the Shingle Weavers' Union, and expelled me as a communist.

KARYL 00:02:42

What year was Bill brought?

HAROLD 00:02:43

In the year 1932. It was said after this, that Bill Hutcheson, president of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners and a member of the AF of L Executive Council was granted jurisdiction over all woodworkers in the saw milling, shingles, plywood, and logging camps of the North American continent. And he classed us as "B class members," in which we paid dues but had no voice or vote in the affairs of that union. He sent a representative to Vancouver to set up a council of woodworkers. Abe Muir, his name was, and he called to gather the various people in the industry, in the union, and outside of the union. And as a result of that conference, a district council of woodworkers, B class members of the Carpenters, were set up, and I became the first vice president of that council. In 1936, a general strike in the industry was organized under the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, which was partially successful. And it was during this strike at the various councils set up by the carpenters, Hutcheson called a conference in Centralia [Washington] in June, 1936, and I was one of the delegates from British Columbia to attend that conference. At that conference, there was some six or eight district councils affiliated that the Carpenters and Joiners represented and it was agreed that the fight would go on inside the Carpenters and Joiners Union to establish our democratic rights, raising the slogan of "no taxation without representation." And it was also agreed that a conference will be held in Portland, Oregon in the following--did I say September?

KARYL 00:02:52

It was either September or October.

HAROLD 00:05:28

September, where the Federation of Woodworkers within the Carpenters and Joiners was established, and officers were elected, and I became the first president of the Federation of Woodworkers affiliated to the Carpenters and Joiners.

KARYL 00:05:51

You did decide to stay within the Carpenters though you knew that friction was continued?

HAROLD 00:05:58

Definitely, yes. And prior to this convention, I must also mention that a delegation of loggers and saw mill workers were sent to Lakeland, Florida, to the Carpenters and Joiners convention. And Bill Hutcheson gagged the delegation, sat them in the corner, and refused them even the right to speak about the problems of our industry.

KARYL 00:06:25

So you knew that friction was going to continue even though you stayed within the union at that time?

HAROLD 00:06:31

Yes.

KARYL 00:06:32

Did you consider any other affiliation? Or did it just not seem feasible at that point?

HAROLD 00:06:38

Well, there was quite a bit of talk in the industry about the CIO [Committee for Industrial Organization within the AFL]. In fact, the words "CIO" were magic and were on the lips of every working man and woman in the United States and Canada. The accomplishments of the CIO had in the last period, short period were outstanding--to say the least-- in organizing the basic industries, heretofore untouched by the AF of L, such as steel, metal mining, automobile, airplanes, wood, and so on. So, the struggle within the leadership of the AF of L was the question of industrial versus craft unionism, craft unionism being upheld by William Green and

Hutcheson and industrial unions being explored, expounded by John L. Lewis and his supporters. And at that time, John L. Lewis and his supporters were prepared to organize the industrial union within the framework of the AF of L. But they were expelled for even attempting to organize the unorganized, which constituted one of the main problems of organized labor in the conference. And William Hutcheson, realizing that there was a revolt in the ranks, called a conference of handpicked representatives in Longview, Washington, a few short weeks after our convention--

KARYL 00:08:23

After your federation?

HAROLD 00:08:23

Where the BC--Where the Federation of Woodworkers was set up, and having heard of this conference, he was surprised to see such a large representation attending this conference, necessitating a larger hall being obtained.

KARYL 00:08:30

Where did you meet them?

HAROLD 00:08:44

Pardon?

KARYL 00:08:45

Where did you meet, eventually?

HAROLD 00:08:47

Well, he originally organized it for the ballroom of a hotel--I've forgotten the name of the hotel, it's still there--to the library auditorium. And then when we arrived at the library auditorium he called the meeting to order and said that he wasn't here to make any promises, or to accept any suggestions, he just wanted to hear what we had to say. And from the rank-and-file delegates from the logging camps, sawmills, singermills, why we're gathered here plenty. And the meeting became so unruly, he declared the meeting adjourned and marched out. And the meeting was called to order, and the proposition or considering affiliation with the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] was proposed.

KARYL 00:08:48

Who took charge of the meeting after Hutcheson walked out?

HAROLD 00:09:33

I did.

KARYL 00:09:34

You did?

HAROLD 00:09:37

The president of the Federation of Woodworkers still in the Carpenters and Joiners. A delegation--a small delegation had met previously with John L. Lewis to explore the possibilities in the event that we could not obtain any reasonable adjustments from William Hutcheson, and could we find a place in the great CIO. And he said the door was open, and it would be entirely up to us when we entered it and when we entered. And to make it clear that he wanted to support the struggles of the woodworkers, he signed a check for \$5,000 in the donation to our cause. (pauses) Now, it was--it wasn't until 1947 a convention of the Federation of Woodworkers held in Tacoma, which lasted 11 days, and only after a referendum vote has been conducted in the entire industry.

KARYL 00:11:05

(inaudible)

HAROLD 00:11:09

Did we finally decide to go CIO? You want to ask that question?

KARYL 00:11:22

Before the Tacoma Convention of 1937, which--in which there was a decision to affiliate with the CIO, what kind of a struggle was there among the various groups, for example, among the district councils and among the various trades, like the shingle workers, and other groups within the Federation about this question?

HAROLD 00:11:48

Well, the situation was present, brought to a head mainly because of Hutcheson's interference, and settlements of wages with employers, several months of strikes behind picket lines and suspension of officers and trackers because they're non-compliant with executive orders. In fact, the whole atmosphere was charged with antagonism towards the leadership of the Carpenters and Joiners Union because of their actions. Coupled with this was an extensive discussion and debate within our own ranks, in which the general expression was for--to leave the Carpenters and Joiners and join the CIO. And many of the people demanding immediate action were of the original conference in Centralia, where they kind of mentioned the germ of the Federation of Woodworkers was established. And of course, the historical events such as the tremendous accomplishments in automobile, the signing of contracts with the Mine Mill [International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers], the organization of the newspaper guild, the school teachers' organization, the farmworkers movement had a tremendous effect upon the woodworkers, and there was a general demand to leave the Carpenters and Joiners and enter the CIO was generated.

KARYL 00:13:54

What about some of the groups within the Federation that opposed it? Who were they and what were their reasons?

HAROLD 00:14:02

Well, if my memory serves me right, the people most desirous of leaving immediately, the Carpenters and Joiners, and becoming part of the CIO was Helmick, Hartung, (pauses) and Tucker, Fadling, and people that really were in our rush to leave the Union of Carpenters and CIO without regard to preparation.

KARYL 00:14:44

These were mostly people from recording the Columbia River District Council.

HAROLD 00:14:47

Yes, the Columbia River District Council were the main people driving for immediate affiliation. In fact, when Dalrymple spoke at the convention in Portland, Oregon, in the Labor Temple, encouraging the delegates to leave the Carpenters and Joiners and come over to Seattle, received a standing ovation when insufficient preparatory work had been accomplished. It was only after a referendum vote had been conducted at a debate in the industry, and the general clash with the representatives of the Carpenters and Joiners was the convention of the Federation of Woodworkers called in Tacoma, and there it was debated for 11 days. With the radio priests speaking for Hutcheson, taking the negative position of craft unionism when spearheading the campaign of Hutcheson within that conviction.

KARYL 00:16:01

Who were some of the people that agreed with Hutcheson and attempted to prevent it?

HAROLD 00:16:04

Well, one was a well known leader in Tacoma, known as Davis, and another one by the name of Homer. And they stayed in the Carpenters and Joiners and still are. And the Lumber and Sawmill Workers Union in the Carpenters and Joiners is probably the headquarters in Tacoma.

KARYL 00:16:29

Why were they so much resistant to joining the CIO from the Puget Sound area?

HAROLD 00:16:34

Well, a funny part of it is that they must have been and were placed on the payroll of the Carpenters and Joiners, and a very healthy reboot to remuneration. John Stanoich was the president of the District Council and former sheriff, stayed with Hutcheson and continued to fight on behalf of Hutcheson against us. At Colvos was a wild scene of many jurisdictional battles between the growing IWA [International Woodworkers of America] and the diminishing Sawmill Workers Union, where the bosses encouraged that kind of jurisdictional warfare.

KARYL 00:17:27

The Shingle Weavers also resisted affiliation with the CIO.

HAROLD 00:17:32

Well, the Shingle Weavers' Council was under the leadership of [?Earl Horr?] who was a Republican candidate in the national elections and a former agent in the days of rum-running of the federal government, and he influenced the Council to stay with the Carpenters and Joiners, which they did. And as a result of that, were able to keep the Shingle Weavers, with the exception of British Columbia, within the Carpenters and Joiners. And incidentally, later, the Shingle Weavers' Union, which is quite a militant, progressive union, in spite of [?Earl Horr?] established the six hour day and still have it.

KARYL 00:18:35

Then following this decision to affiliate with the CIO. (pauses) What were the--This was due to the meeting at this time, and the organization's name was officially changed to the International Woodworkers Association, right?

HAROLD 00:18:55

Yeah.

KARYL 00:18:55

And then following that there was quite a bitter jurisdictional dispute in Portland. Can you comment on that?

HAROLD 00:19:06

Well, the employers had discovered that since we'd established our organization and gained in strength with the support of the CIO, for the first time in the history of the woodworking industry, industry-wide negotiations were forced, in which the Columbia River District leadership were very reluctant to drag their feet but finally participated. And an industry wide contract was worked out, covering all of the sections or subsections in the industry such as logging, sawmilling, booms, shingles--and shingles would only apply in BC--and plywood. And the employers had quickly discovered that this union could not be defeated when they head-on fight, and it necessitated they come in the back door, which they proceeded to do. And through their agents, paid agents, were successful in creating disruption within the union. In which the self-named so-called "white block" was established against the so-called "red block," which, they maintained, constituted the entire international union leadership. With the exception of Weber, the secretary.

KARYL 00:20:45

They made these charges against the IWA?

HAROLD 00:20:48

Yes.

KARYL 00:20:50

And this grew out of the Portland strike?

HAROLD 00:20:54

No, the Portland (pauses) problem was when they jumped the gun in their (bell rings) smaller sawmill. And in order to make their strike successful, they picketed the waterfront and attempted to draw the longshoremen into the battle. Without consultation with the longshoremen.

KARYL 00:21:24

What was the longshoremen's response to this?

HAROLD 00:21:27

The longshoremen pointed out that strikes are won at the point of production, and not 40 or 50 miles away. That file of longshoremen were prepared to assess any legitimate strike, they were not prepared to shoulder the strike themselves, which is very logical. But the Columbia River District Council established a policy of isolation, going in alone, as an organization within itself. And the less they recognized the international by per capita payments or participation in industry wide negotiations or anything else, the better. They were separated, and they did it deliberately. They were against the wishes of their own membership.

KARYL 00:22:28

This was the leadership of the Columbia River District--

HAROLD 00:22:31

Yes.

KARYL 00:22:32

That was maintaining some kind of independence from the idea of using--

HAROLD 00:22:36

That's right, because they didn't elect their officers they wanted.

KARYL 00:22:42

What were some of the factors that influenced their going in alone? They had been some of the strongest supporters of CIO affiliation.

HAROLD 00:22:53

Well, while it's true that the opposants in the Columbia River District Council spoke out strongly in favor of leaving the Carpenters and transferring our membership to the CIO, when it came to the actual showdown, they were hesitant and back staged it--that they would rather--they preferred to wait and see. Not to rush, not to be in a hurry, let's wait and see. This slogan "let's wait and see" was raised by the preacher in the Tacoma convention, let's wait and see. I think too that the Columbia River District Council was influenced by the agents, paid agents, who were sent in there to do that kind of splitting job, and they were very successful.

KARYL 00:24:02

Getting back to the Portland dispute, which was in the latter part of 1937. I understand this was quite a bitter dispute and the mills were closed down even after the NLRB (National Labor Relations Board) certified the IWA and the local bargaining delineation. Can you comment on some of the things that occurred after that? There was a boycott and the longshoremen became involved. How are you involved in this dispute?

HAROLD 00:24:40

Well, the dispute that developed in Portland, Oregon, was a dispute between the IWA who had changed its affiliation from the Carpenters and those few stooges on the Carpenters and Joiners who just wanted to maintain its bargaining agency. And it became therefore a jurisdictional warfare between the IWA, which constituted majority in the sawmills, and the minority which represented Bill Hutcheson, of the Carpenters and Joiners. Now, there was a similar occasion in Tacoma, where we made an appeal to the honest membership of the AF of L. But the jurisdictional warfare being conducted by the Carpenters and Joiners leadership, benefit only the employers and didn't benefit either the main membership or the craft union membership, and that workers should have a common interest, and you must develop a united struggle against the employers. And we were successful, in many instances, of eliminating jurisdictional picket lines, whereas a harder line was pursued by the Columbia River District Council in Portland, and it developed into warfare. Guerilla warfare. And it was carried right into the streets and into the mills, and even involving long trauma.

KARYL 00:26:23

What was the longshoremen's role in this, they refused to handle [?inaudible?] at [?inaudible?], did they?

HAROLD 00:26:29

No, mainly they declared that by the Columbia River District Council the longshoremen were expected to refuse to handle, and it became a very complicated situation. Since of course, it's been cleared up. Today there are no AF of L mills in Portland, Oregon. And there's only about two in Tacoma. And in British Columbia, and there's only three AF of L mills at his cockamamie Joiners B class membership.

KARYL 00:27:06

But at this time the longshoremen were refusing to handle the AFL cargo and there was a threat to close the port by the employer.

HAROLD 00:27:17

Yeah, the employers taking advantage of an internal fight within the trade union movement were attempting to impose a lockout, which is low strike and to intensify the struggle within the house of labor. They are interested in division. The threatened lockout, which is the employer's strike.

KARYL 00:27:47

Why was--why were the longshoremen reluctant to have the port closed at this time? Why was it for them a disaster?

HAROLD 00:27:55

Well, it's understandable because the longshoremen were operating under a signed contract, and that they hadn't been consulted in any way, shape, or form as to how they would be involved in this mess. And they wanted to work. No reason why they shouldn't.

KARYL 00:28:21

Were you in--working with them at this time to determine what their condition would be and how you would react to it?

HAROLD 00:28:30

Well, my thought is that wherever you're going to institute a policy of struggle, which involves other workflows besides the members of your own union, it always is good business to consult first with those that you expect to involve. And there, that's been the policy. And in this case, the officer with the ILWU, Harry Bridges, the other international officers were not consulted, in fact, were referred to as finks.

KARYL 00:29:09

By whom?

HAROLD 00:29:10

By IWA officials in the Columbia River. But that situation doesn't exist today.

KARYL 00:29:20

So eventually it was worked out and support was not followed?

HAROLD 00:29:23

No support network was followed. Of course, I'm expressing now thoughts and opinions of history way back.

KARYL 00:29:39

Right.

HAROLD 00:29:39

And it's very difficult to remember every great detail

KARYL 00:29:42

Right, right. [inaudible?] So there was an IWA convention and followed there was quite a bit of dissension within the convention involving the Columbia River District and the IWA leadership. Do you recall anything that was--represented an issue?

HAROLD 00:30:05

Well, one of the biggest difficulties within the constitutional convention, where the constitution was drafted by a constitutional committee and submitted to the convention, which found its greatest problem, one of the clauses called Nazis, fascists, and communists in which Helmick, who was a member of the constitution's committee, and his supporters insisted, as does the FBI, that this clause should go in. Now, this lays one in a position on the convention floor of if you voted against a constitutional amendment calling for the expulsion of Nazis and fascists, you would be supporting Nazis and fascists, or even communists. So that didn't leave you much choice, but to vote in favor of a constitutional amendment that barred communists, Nazis, and fascists when there's no comparison between the two.

KARYL 00:31:29

Right. Was this amendment to the constitution, adapted or...

HAROLD 00:31:34

Yes, by a small minority--majority, a small majority, adopted that and it's been in the constitution ever since. And it's been used effectively by reactionary leaders of the IWA to bar communists from membership, but never Nazis and fascists.

KARYL 00:31:58

They weren't so worried about not being a fascist. (pauses) Then there was a strike at the same mill in Tacoma, you know, in 1939. That was quite a fierce strike. There was a lot of dissension about the chairman regarding agents. Can you comment on this strike and how you were involved in it?

HAROLD 00:32:30

Well, this is the point I made previously about the Tacoma affair, where the employers, and there were some big lumbering and plywood operators in Tacoma, took advantage of a disagreement within the moment to further their own ends, and that encouraged their fictional hog grab to the extent that top leaders of various AF of L craft unions brought craftsmen down on the picket lines and forced them there by making them come to the picket line to hire out. They established their hiring hall on the picket lines. And I became involved in this when I spoke to the strikers and the AF of L picket line on the porch in the company's office, with the management standing alongside me and pointed out to "you brothers behind our picket line, are you pickets behind our men, are working against labor and working in favor of this employer," and I pointed to the employer. And I got a good strong applause. And as a result of being so called out they packed their little picket line and melted away like snow in the sunshine. And eventually the lockout, which was the employer tactic, was defeated and the men--our men--went back to work, and the contract was eventually signed. But it was a very bitter struggle. Here's where they introduced the goons.

KARYL 00:34:19

Whose goons at the strike?

HAROLD 00:34:21

[?inaudible?]

KARYL 00:34:24

This is the 1939 strike at a sawmill in Tacoma?

HAROLD 00:34:25

Yes. The employers refused to sign a contract with the IWA, maintaining that they had to also representation from the AF of L. The AF of L was nothing! But they maintained the legal position that they couldn't bargain with the IWA because here's the AF of L asking to bargain. And the AF of L tried to justify their position by bringing outsiders to a picket line to stop our people from working.

KARYL 00:34:54

And that's--

HAROLD 00:34:54

And our job to defeat the lockout was for workers to get back to work.

KARYL 00:35:00

This was--this explains why--I understand you encouraged the backward movement, because you felt it was an employer's lockout.

HAROLD 00:35:08

Right, you defeat a lockout, a boss's strike by getting back to work.

KARYL 00:35:11

So you were not in favor of any kind of election at that time?

HAROLD 00:35:15

No, we weren't in favor bringing one.

KARYL 00:35:18

Or have an election because you felt that previous--

HAROLD 00:35:22

We had won the election.

KARYL 00:35:24

Right.

HAROLD 00:35:24

Yeah. NLRB.

KARYL 00:35:33

There was also trouble at the Bloedel-Donovan, you know, but I wonder if you can come--

KARYL 00:35:42

Yeah, this is another one of these jurisdictional--

HAROLD 00:35:44

Bellingham?

HAROLD 00:35:44

Well, this was long before. This was why we had the BC Federation of Woodworkers. And a man by the name of [?Inge?], who was proven to be a Pinkerton agent after, attempted to destroy the Carpenters and Joiners Union and its representation in the Bloedel-Donovan Mill in Bellingham. And incidentally in Bellingham, there was at one time a fairly large, influential Ku Klux Klan movement.

KARYL 00:36:09

In Bellingham?

HAROLD 00:36:25

Yes. Howard Costigan, Secretary of the Commonwealth Federation, Washington, Colorado Federation and I spoke at a big rally in Bellingham and the Ku Klux Klan leader came to the rally and demanded to speak to us. And we had the longshoremen or the woodworkers (pauses) there in great numbers. And it was during that time that Inge initiated a battle, fully supplied with liquor, to disrupt the union. And I spoke to the IWA membership in Bellingham when the president introduced me and left the platform. And the first thing that [?Inge?] she got up and demanded was where was the American flag? And I had no chairman of the meeting. So I said, "Well, we'll just hold up the meeting until we get a flag." So they got a flag and then he said, "Now we're gonna pledge our allegiance to the flag." So we all turned and pledged our allegiance to the flag. And then he gets up and demanded that I go back to BC with my "chinks and Hindus where I belong."

KARYL 00:37:40

(laughs) And those words that he used, this comes--

HAROLD 00:37:41

It was only after a two and a half hour struggle that we finally got the meeting into order and those people had to leave. And they were sitting in the front row, amply supplied with liquor. It was about 10, I'd say, and the meeting was packed. This is where it was for showing up.

KARYL 00:38:00

I don't know if it was the same strike at Bloedel-Donovan. But the--I understood the lumber industry was a bust at the time, like there was some desire for wage cuts in order to enlarge the employment for it. What was--How did this affect the IWA?

HAROLD 00:38:28

It was proposed to wage cut?

KARYL 00:38:31

Yeah, in order to encourage a larger employment force. This was late in--it should have been about in '39, I believe. And I think the Carpenters have benefited from this.

HAROLD 00:38:50

Well, my memory doesn't serve me on this point.

KARYL 00:38:53

Okay.

HAROLD 00:38:54

Sorry.

KARYL 00:38:54

You may not have been--

HAROLD 00:38:57

The lumber employers are always looking for wage cuts for some method of getting greater production for less manpower.

KARYL 00:39:05

(pauses) Would you like to come in on some of this condition in the ranks in the Tacoma local in which Harry Tucker gained some power?

HAROLD 00:39:31

(coughs) Efficiently the period when they're standing arm at Davis? Stayed with the Carpenters and Joiners, you mean?

KARYL 00:39:31

This would have been later, this would have been--well, it would have would have been over a period of time but it would have been like in 1938 and 1939.

KARYL 00:39:49

Yes, well, that would be the period when Davis, the steady arm, stayed with Homer and the Carpenters and Joiners and set up the Tacoma District Council of the Carpenters and Joiners Woodworkers. And they're still in existence in a small way. I believe they have one sawmill in Seattle and about two sawmills in Tacoma. That's about their limit.

KARYL 00:40:22

And here Harry Tucker was--

HAROLD 00:40:23

Harry Tucker was from the IWA, and he was the business agent in Aberdeen, Washington. And he was a supporter of Helmick.

KARYL 00:41:09

He was quite critical of the IWA leadership.

HAROLD 00:41:09

Yes.

KARYL 00:41:09

What was--

HAROLD 00:41:09

He was part of the white bar, self-named "white bar."

KARYL 00:41:09

What were some of the charges that he raised? And what were some of the tactics that he used during that period?

HAROLD 00:41:11

Well, the main things were petty and technical details such as we didn't mean any increase in per capita. In other words, they starve off the president's leadership. The officers of the island knew they were spending too much money. We shouldn't organize in the Deep South, we should organize only in Washington and Oregon. And a lot of little, small details, technical difficulties raised at all the times questioning, questioning, rather than supporting a sound policy.

KARYL 00:41:42

What do you--

HAROLD 00:41:43

The big question, of course, was the communist bogey. And continuously, Tucker was one of those who continuously raised the red bogey.

KARYL 00:41:54

And after this constitutional amendment rights are supposed to be used to great advantage by the anti-unionists?

HAROLD 00:42:03

Yes, it was part of that movement to establish it in the contract, and they had the full support of all the businessmen's associations.

KARYL 00:42:15

You mentioned in organizing a town's [?inaudible?] job. Could you comment on that? So what kind of attempts were made?

HAROLD 00:42:24

Well, at that time, I made a tour of the Deep South and spoke at some 32 meetings, including radio broadcasts. It took me over a month to make the tour. I went as far south as West Virginia and (coughs) the Carolinas. And it was my opinion, in my opinion very successful with the assistance of the CIO directors in each state. I spoke with a meeting in Birmingham, in the courthouse, which was made of black marble, beautiful building built by WPA [Works Progress Administration] workers. And we obtained the courthouse on a Sunday afternoon for an organizational meeting of the CIO, for the IWA.

HAROLD 00:43:31

And I spoke from the washroom. And the Negroes sat on one side of the courtroom and the whites sat on the other. And there was a very good meeting, they came from all over on bicycles and buggies, and all broken down cars, and walked, and everything else. The only way of expression of their appreciation of the organization was after I'd finished speaking for over an hour, each got up and testified to the possibilities of organization. One old Negro said, "Praise the Lord, our brothers in the CIO have finally arrived!"

KARYL 00:43:31

(laughs)

KARYL 00:44:20

(laughs)

HAROLD 00:44:22

And incidentally, a Black preacher led the meeting with the Lord's Prayer and closed the meeting with the Lord's Prayer, which was an unusual experience for me. And every one of the people and, including Blacks and whites shook hands with me before they left, lined up to do it.

KARYL 00:44:45

But what you--

HAROLD 00:44:45

Another example was we held a meeting in the theater and it was necessary to have a picket line outside because the vigilantes had fired across up on the hill, and that was a very successful meeting. The turpentine workers were highly exploited, long hours and miserable wages, were very receptive to our organization. That

was my only occasion to go into the South before I--my permit expire, and I had returned to Canada. But the CIO was to talk with the people everywhere you went.

KARYL 00:44:47

Was this--

HAROLD 00:44:49

Kansas City, there was 5000 people come to the airport to meet me. Kansas City.

KARYL 00:45:31

Was this in 1939, roughly?

HAROLD 00:45:33

Just before I came back in the early 40's.

KARYL 00:45:36

Early in the 1940's, you were in the Deep South?

HAROLD 00:45:40

Yes. I spoke on the radio. I met some furniture workers from Chicago.

KARYL 00:45:48

What was the effect of the CIO's decision to try to organize the Blacks themselves at that time?

HAROLD 00:45:56

Well, they were running into a lot of difficulties, I believe that some of the difficulties have now been overcome since the struggle of the Blacks has intensified and has won the support of large sections of the white population. The fight for freedom is here, and it was so in that day and we're still right now, even union men,

union white workers, looked down on Black workers, figured that they were second-class citizens, but that atmosphere is changing. It's improving. It's much easier now than then.

KARYL 00:46:38

At what time--at this time what was the effect of this organizing drive?

HAROLD 00:46:43

(coughs) Well, the CIO had conducted a very successful drive in steel in the Deep South, and in the rubber workers. (microphone cuts out) IWA organization, went south and they sent their own representatives to the convention, as you'll see in the minutes. And many of these representatives, both Black and white, spoke in conventions about the problems in the Deep South.

KARYL 00:47:19

I wonder if you'd like to go into the organizational drive that was conducted under the auspices of the CIA--CIO--national leadership when Adolph Germer came out to the Northwest.

HAROLD 00:47:40

Of course, that was after I left you see, Germer came after.

KARYL 00:47:47

I believe that he was here shortly.

HAROLD 00:47:52

After '40.

KARYL 00:47:53

Were you involved in obtaining an organizer to take on some of the responsibilities in the Northwest? Before you visited?

HAROLD 00:48:05

Well as I said before, a few of the developments within the IWA, the activities of the so-called "white block," we presented our case to the CIO, John L. Lewis and all of the evidence of the disruption and made it fierce employer-inspired and asked for assistance. And he sent out Mr. Whitman, who conducted the investigation, and we introduced the international officers and staff, called anyone who wished, took evidence, and then he called in the so-called "white line" (bell rings) for their positions, and reported back to John L. Lewis. And among one of the suggestions he made was that the CIO assisted financing an organizational drive in the IWA, the IWA being starved for funds, and he also recognized the importance in increasing the per capita, which had been defeated so far by the white bar.

KARYL 00:49:24

So some of these officers, particularly in the Columbia River District Convention--

HAROLD 00:49:30

Yeah, Cowan Hartfelder became the international president later who now functions down--or the international officers now function, on I believe it's a dollar and a half. I'm not sure it's either a dollar and a quarter or a dollar and a half. So we started out on five cents and then it became 25 cents. And it was possible to service the membership and organize the unorganized on that amount. And they knew that, but they still resisted on a political basis. And Whitman's recommendation was that the CIO assist them actually in organizing and let the IWA raise its per capita so it could meet its obligations, not only to the CIO, but to its membership and the unorganized. (coughs) Germer was sent out here by John L. Lewis as an assistant director of organization--or the director of organization, and he appointed George Grotto as assistant director of organization, who's now the secretary of the state council CIO in Portland, in Oregon.

KARYL 00:50:53

How did this organizing drive affect the IWA leadership?

HAROLD 00:51:01

Well, you're asking me a question of which I don't know part of because I was denied re-entry, and I can't--I can only surmise what happened. As you know, the IWA leadership was completely changed, and the militant progressive leadership formerly existed in the IWA does no longer exist. And from the leading union in Canada, we've now dropped down to a very low end. We led all unions in Canada, and wage increases, fringe benefits, industry-wide contract, vacations, and paying overtime. Now we're one of the last on the list. So that is the result of employer-inspired interference in internal affairs of unions.

KARYL 00:52:10

Would you comment on your refusal to be readmitted into the United States? This was a long battle.

HAROLD 00:52:22

Well, it's pretty obvious that the United States immigration and state department are sympathetic to the employers. And the employers took no interference with their profit scapes. For example, the leading immigrant--United States immigration officer in British Columbia for many years, is also himself a logging camp owner or part-owner in British Columbia, and his son was the superintendent. And he wasn't sympathetic to the cause of progressive labor, because it affected his camp and his profits. And the state and the immigration department are influenced by big business. Big business doesn't want anybody that's going to represent the true interests of labor because they're opposed to the interests of profits and big business. So the state and the immigration department is used very effectively to deny workers their right to elected leadership.

KARYL 00:53:48

And you had been going back and forth between Canada and the United States under permits, had you not?

HAROLD 00:53:58

Yes.

KARYL 00:53:58

For some time. You had also wanted to immigrate into the United States for some time?

HAROLD 00:54:08

Well, I applied for immigration status, in order to become a citizen, and I was given the hearing. I purchased all the necessary documents, including passport pictures and my own family, and had medical examination, and passed every other test, but was denied the right to become an immigrant with new citizenship in the United States, and I remained on the permit status.

KARYL 00:54:45

This is over a period of--

HAROLD 00:54:47

Alien, alien status. Immigrant alien. No--yes, alien. Just forget the terms now.

KARYL 00:54:59

At any rate, finally you were refused entry altogether, is that right?

HAROLD 00:55:03

Yes, yeah.

KARYL 00:55:04

And then how did this affect your leadership with the IW of A?

HAROLD 00:55:09

Well, I had to resign as international president and a member of the CIO Executive Council.

KARYL 00:55:19

Did you make some attempts to try to gain re-entry in order to continue?

HAROLD 00:55:24

Well, John L. Lewis was consulted, and the CIO Executive Council was consulted, and it was found that it would be impossible to continue with the struggle for my re-entry. And as a result of that, I resigned and became the leader of the woodworkers in British Columbia. Later I became secretary of the BC Federation of Labor.

KARYL 00:55:51

But that ended your involvement in the lumber industry in the United States then, right?

HAROLD 00:56:00

Yes.

KARYL 00:56:00

In 1940?

HAROLD 00:56:02

Right.

KARYL 00:56:03

Going back a little bit, can you comment on some of the other labor groups that were involved in some of those attempts, these attempted struggles within the labor--within labor unions in the lumber industry, particularly the Teamsters, in terms of this?

HAROLD 00:56:29

Well, my own experience in the United States was during the period of Dave Beck in Seattle. And that was a very sorry experience because the leadership of the Teamsters Union was wanting, from the viewpoint of labor. But since Dave Beck's period, Hoffa was selected to be the international president, and they acquired--discovered that it was impossible to buy off Hoffa, as they did Dave Beck. And Hoffa had a plan to organize a federation of Teamsters and longshoremens and warehouse workers, into a federation, which would be a very powerful organization in the United States, and applied in Canada, also. That would be the complete transportation system under one roof, and so they framed him, and they sent him to jail. And when he's finished the first jail term that he's now serving, and is about to be released on good behavior, he still faces another nine years, and after that another because of the three charges against. So my experience with the Teamsters leadership was very sorry, to say the least.

KARYL 00:58:18

What kind of--were there inroads made on the organizational efforts of the IW of A?

HAROLD 00:58:25

Well, the Teamsters made quite a number of attempts to take over, first it was the logging truck drivers and the carrier drivers, and the sawdust and wood truck drivers everything. What are on wheels, the Teamsters tried to take it over on the basis it belonged to them. But our union organized on the basis of industrial organization. And our slogan was, "from the stump to the finished product," as Hadley was saying. So that, we refused to

allow encroachment by the Teamster officials in the IWA. And then, to date, in the main, we've been successful at stopping that encroachment. And there are other craft unions that have been trying to do the same thing, such as the engineers, and the electricians, and so on.

KARYL 00:59:25

There were repeated efforts made then by the Teamsters to--

HAROLD 00:59:29

Oh, yes.

KARYL 00:59:29

--make inroads into your territory?

HAROLD 00:59:31

Yeah, there was incidents on the highway with logging trucks, I saw tires being slashed and drivers being beat up. Sometimes there we had to have guards to protect our members.

KARYL 00:59:49

Was this struggle particularly keen in any one strike that you recall?

HAROLD 00:59:56

No, usually in a strike it's far easier to solidify all the ranks of labor against the common enemy, which the employer.

KARYL 01:00:08

But was more at other times when they were organizing--

HAROLD 01:00:10

Yes, when the Teamsters were trying to muscle in. And of course, the the main enemy is forgotten in that internal struggle, arguing against another. And there is such a thing as union cannibalism, where one union tries to eat another one, but the industrial union form of organization will make--it will prevail, because it's scientifically correct. One industry, one vertical type of union. The craft unions are being replaced by technological development and the idea of being horizontal type of organization doesn't prevail. There's only two or three engineers in the great big operation. And incidentally, with the machine age and the technological developments, even the life of the industrial unions are threatened. In my own industry, for example, sash and door industry that was highly (pauses) highly organized by management with manpower, today there is hardly a man in sight. It's all done automatically.

KARYL 01:01:44

I'm curious about one thing: Weren't the shingle leavers generally a strong craft group?

HAROLD 01:01:54

Yes, well, the shingle weavers isn't a craft, it's actually a skill. It's not a tradesman it's a skilled workman. And it does require a degree of sensitive know-how to do it. Not everybody can be successful at sawing shingles or weaving shingles, weaving means to saw back into a bundle, weave into a bundle. The employers recently have been trying to automate the industry. And they've tried it in two mills without success, but they're still working at it. They use the the electric guy, and so on. But they haven't yet made a success of it because it requires that individual application, creating, the sawing itself, the visualization of all the wood, and you know, so the shingle industry has so far not been automated, but that that doesn't mean to say it won't be. There will be a day when they have finalized the automation. So the shingle sawyers and packers will all be a thing of the past.

KARYL 01:03:20

This is quite a different topic, but considering that the currency the topic, I wonder if you're interested in saying anything about the recent Canadian situation, this extension and similarities in Canada and what you're actually thinking this is going to take, or might take?

HAROLD 01:03:39

You mean the imposition of the War Measures Act by the Trudeau government?

KARYL 01:03:43

Right.

HAROLD 01:03:45

Well, I would say that this means the complete downfall of the Trudeau government. Because no government in the history of Canada is ever imposed the War Measures Act in peacetime. Secondly, he had no need whatsoever to impose such an act, there's plenty of laws in the statutes to take care of those anarchists who believe that the system can be changed by murder, and by hijacking, and by kidnapping, which we don't agree with. We don't agree with force and violence, the employer practices that. And there's a good way to take care of such minority groups that believe in such tactics. But on the other hand, you see, the federal government's enactment of the War Measures Act and the Quebec government's request for it doesn't resolve the problems of the people of Quebec, which Bourassa, the recently elected premier of Quebec, promised to people in his election campaign to create 100,000 new jobs. He hasn't done the thing towards that. He hasn't done anything about the backwardness of their educational system, which 52% of the people in Quebec are semi-illiterate, 52%. Child labor is rampant, low wages, long hours, conditions in Quebec are explosive, to say the least. And he realizes that. And he asked the federal government, without yet a reason given, nobody has yet stated why the War Measures Act was necessary in Canada. So that the basic problems of the French Canadian people are not resolved, and no War Measures Act is going to resolve it. And that doesn't stop the French Canadian people from having the right as Canadian citizens to determine their status. Whether it be if they want to separate or not. Separation, in my opinion, is not the issue. The issue is one of the pork chops, bread and butter. (pauses) Housing is one of the biggest problems in the whole of Canada, and in Quebec on the housing question. So we condemn the federal government for the enactment of the War Measures Act, and join with all labor, and progressive people, including many churches, in demanding its removal, and support the NDP that did--16 of them--voted against the government. Three broke ranks in demanding its recall and insisting that no legislation enacted, they're already considering new legislation to take its place. There's no need of it, the criminal law will take care of it. Every lawyer will tell you, there's plenty of law in the statute books now to take care of anarchists, we don't need anymore.

KARYL 01:07:31

That was--that might have quite a different effect.

HAROLD 01:07:37

A different effect?

KARYL 01:07:39

And I mean that they might have--they won't solve the problems of the Canadian government or the French Canadian people, in your opinion, and they might affect other groups, not the anarchists that they were meant to.

HAROLD 01:07:54

Yes, they hope to affect the civil liberties of all Canadians, including anyone, even the school teachers nowadays. The enforcement of the War Measures Act is left in the hands of each individual attorney general in each province, and there's 10 provinces. And this attorney general in British Columbia has now made it compulsory to fire any teacher that speaks about Quebec and the FLQ [Front de Libération du Québec (Quebec Liberation Front)], and two teachers are already been fired. And the teachers' union is up in arms, and demanding their reinstatement, and demanding that this kind of business stop. The mayor of Vancouver who is now running for re-election Campbell, a multimillionaire, has stated that he will use the War Measures Act against the hippies and the United States deserters. So where are you going to stop? So they attack the communists next and the trade unions, and that is exactly the way Hitler worked.

KARYL 01:09:10

Anyone who disagrees with you.

HAROLD 01:09:12

That's right, anybody that disagrees with the government is subject to the War Measures Act.

KARYL 01:09:19

Well, I think that's the extent of my question. Do you have any--

HAROLD 01:09:22

Well, thank you very much for coming.